(b) if so, how the Ministry plans to subsidize Jatropha cultivation; and

(c) whether any estimate has been made about the commercial viability of producing bio-diesel by this process, as the conventional diesel is being sold at highly subsidized rates?

THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, as per Wasteland Atlas of India (2005), the total wasteland in the country is estimated at 55.2 million hectares. An amount of Rs. 49.00 crore was released by Ministry of Rural Development during 2005-06 and Rs. 49.50 crore in the States for raising Jatropha nurseries. The Ministry of Agriculture through National Oilseeds and Vegetable Oils Development (NOVOD) Board is providing 100% financial assistance to State Governments/Institutions for undertaking plantation of Jatropha for bio-diesel production on Government/Institutional land as promotional programme. Besides, the Board also provides 30% financial assistance under Back-Ended Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme to individuals and Non-governmental organisations to the extent of Rs. 6.50 lakh.

(c) Commercial viability of producing bio-diesel from Jatropha has not yet been established on account of non-availability of sufficient quantities of planting materials and non-edible oil seeds.

Release of funds under NBMMP

3278. SHRI BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Will the Minister of NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether proposals to release funds for the year 2007-08 for Maharashtra under the centrally sponsored National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMP) are long pending before Government;

(b) whether it is a fact that delay in releasing funds to State Governments unnecessarily imposes financial burden on the States' economy and affects smooth running of the programme, as well; and

(c) what steps Government proposes to take to release these funds without much delay?

THE MINISTER OF NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Under the National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMP), the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has released first installment of 50% of the Central Financial Assistance (CFA) in accordance with the allocation of physical target for the year 2007-08 to the State of Maharashtra. In accordance with the provisions of the programme, balance of the funds is released on receipt of satisfactory progress report, utilization certificate and AG audited statement of accounts.

As the State Government of Maharashtra did not submit their claims alongwith the audited statement of accounts from the office of the Account General of Maharashtra, the balance of the funds could not be released. The funds would be released after the receipt of required documents from the State Government of Maharashtra.